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MUSIC

I. Music in the School Community

Carlyle, with his doctrines of the necessity and the honor and the beauty of work; Morris and the Arts and Crafts people, with their modern demonstration of the need and the possibility of beauty in the every-day, serviceable things, of life; Tolstoi, with his demand that we must take no account of beauty which cannot be felt by the most ignorant man; and the Socialists, teaching on the one hand that every man ought to have the stimulation and the opportunity for expression in forms of beauty, and on the other that the services of the artist should be socialized, like the other work and play of the world,—are all preaching essentially from the same old text: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” In the terms of the present day social consciousness, the text means that, if you want beautiful things for yourself, you must do your share toward bringing them to some one else who wants them, or, perhaps, only needs them; that, if you have the power to bring beautiful things into the world, you must see that they are of a kind to be loved by more than a few artists like yourself.

The Florentine painters and the mediaeval cathedral-builders have shown us that democratic art—art understood and loved by the whole people, belonging to the whole people—is no more dependent upon the inspiration of the great genius than it is upon the socially-stimulated imagination of common men, who, working to the best of their ability to embody their dreams in forms of beauty, gain thereby the power really to appreciate the gift of the uncommon man. And I believe that the American music which shall one day be evolved from the unification of the two sources of beauty—the extraordinary power to express and the ordinary power to appreciate—is to be one of the nation’s great spiritual assets. Can music in the school be made to contribute in any degree to this new type of socialized art?

Our school sets out deliberately to be a democracy, in which each individual may reach his best development in fulfilling his responsibility to the school community. It proposes to provide,

by its very organization, constant opportunity for the social incentive in every activity of the curriculum, so that there may be movement towards wider fields of experience than the merely individualistic motive can find out. Such an organization provides a basis for genuine expression in beautiful forms. The teachers of drama, art, music, modeling, and printing are enabled to direct their efforts so that the subjects are kept from being merely ends in themselves. They serve some definite purpose which adds to the intrinsic joy of the result a sense of pleasure in the participation of others. They are made an organic part of the school life.

It is this recognition by the school of music as a social function which determines the best elements of our music study.

There is a steady, quiet joy to be seen frequently in a group of children who are living under the influence of a grade teacher wise enough to know what responsibility means in the terms of child-character. If she have the ability to plan work in a way that tends toward right character-forming, and can conduct each child safely through the moral crises in which he constructs his social standards for himself, the result is a kind of freedom, and at the same time an orderly joyousness which make favorable conditions for expression in forms of beauty.

An emphatic demand for music in the year's important school events is one of the traditions of the school. A feeling of responsibility is established in the children, making them flexible, sensitive, and full of the spirit of good work; it gives them the "team" idea on a large scale. The feeling of doing something toward a large community end stirs them deeply at times, and brings about in the chorus-singing emotional experiences impossible in small groups working for slighter ends. It stimulates the power of personal control through long, trying rehearsals—both the unmusical and the musical children needing patience for different reasons. In the high school, it affords the unmusical and those who are over-eager about credits, the one adequate reason for keeping a non-optional, non-credit course in a crowded curriculum. It gives both types their interest in doing the best work possible to them, since they have the satisfaction of being useful, if only in slight measure, in an enterprise of considerable moment to the school; indeed, it forms the teachers' best basis of relationship with such children. A child can hardly have a more useful experience than that of throwing himself body and soul, at

some personal cost of strength and patience, into an undertaking in which the spiritual ideals of the community are expressed, and his individual skill brought to its highest point—the whole inspired with a common feeling of value, and a common joy in the result. This happens perhaps five or six times during the year in our chorus singing, and it is by far the most useful contribution of music-study to the school.

The motive constantly held before the various classes in the regular lessons is a social one. The steady concentration of the children through weeks of practice upon details of chorus singing, during the times when other interests press hard upon them, shows a deeper, more effectual motive than that of vanity in the success of a school exhibition. (It may be remarked here that applause for the children's singing, excepting at school "recitals," is never permitted.) Motives other than the social one no doubt enter in, but shallow motives do not produce the unmistakable quality of genuine expressiveness. The ideas suggested to the classes are such as these:

The chorus needs high, clear tones; the sopranos must work on that point. It needs good chest-tones; the seventh and eighth grade boys must provide a pleasing alto part that can be relied upon. The tenors, weak as they are, must rise to the needs of the chorus, as far as possible. The basses must work for a quality and an expressiveness which will fit them for singing with the flexible sopranos. The fifth and sixth grade boys must learn to use their voices better, so that they shall not spoil the soprano quality. The chorus needs each one's very best, and even the little children learn to make an almost perfect attack in helping to sing a few simple songs and hymns in morning exercises.

Besides these contributions to the ensemble singing, various groups are arranged to work upon the kind of songs especially adapted to them. The boys from the fifth through the twelfth grades learn a four-part chorus for Lincoln's birthday; the girls sing most of the May Day music; the little children sing to each other, and occasionally to the older ones; each class prepares a song for the school recitals about twice a year; volunteer quartettes work outside of school hours and are especially useful in the luncheon-room singing.

The feeling for music as a necessary and valuable part of life in the school community must be cultivated before the chil-

dren can have the best disposition towards the careful, steady drill necessary for progress on a basis of personal freedom and initiative.

In the minds of the children when they first come to us, music generally has the adventitious character of an entertaining accomplishment. They must find out the serious possibilities of musical experience through pleasure in singing and hearing much good music. It is a simpler matter to build up the new mass of experience for them when the community is put upon a basis which at Christmas time calls for a *spiritual service* rather than an entertainment, and when commencement is made one of the most serious days in the whole school year.

But serious music is not like a new language which has to be learned, for of course children love all music which possesses any vital qualities whatsoever. It is as easy for them to enjoy Reinecke, Taubert, and Schumann, or fine, dignified anthems and choruses, as the latest popular dance music, and it is by providing the community spirit with a medium of expression which proves its own genuineness through the years, that an understanding and a feeling for great music is gradually brought about.

With the youngest, as well as the oldest children, emphasis is placed upon the social possibilities of the music work. In the kindergarten, where the children react in a direct and complete way to the suggestion of giving pleasure to others, no further motive is necessary for the purposes of the teacher; but the joy of contributing to the important matter of morning exercises is an added incentive to exactness of attack and steadiness of attention in following a leader. All of the primary grades feel the importance of helping the older children in morning exercises whenever that is possible; but their real center of interest lies in "rehearsal"—twenty minutes long—in which each grade assists in the little unison choruses, or presents songs prepared in the separate classes. Rehearsals have grown to be a factor in the development of the feeling that singing can have a wider usefulness than the music-room affords. Working simply for good singing as such does not produce as good results. The children learn to know and care definitely about distinctness of utterance, beauty of tone, and other details of good song singing when these are put before them as means of making the song more beautiful for presenting to others.

We want the fifth and sixth grades to enter the wider life of the upper school in every profitable way. They attend all morning exercises and the weekly rehearsals, learn all the hymns and songs for those occasions, and assist as sopranos in the "big" choruses. This is a serious and important business to them, and is especially useful for the boys. They must learn to sing as accurately and follow a leader as well as the high school does. They must sometimes learn hymns and choruses far beyond the range of their present experiences, and it has a sobering and steadying influence upon them—a direct effect of coöperation with the older children in their maturer enterprises. Sometimes the music is beyond them from the vocal point of view, but the spiritual gain most certainly offsets that disadvantage.

The children from the seventh to the twelfth grades attain a serious interest in their part of the singing in the school. Many boys, whose weak, unstable tone-production and narrow range make it difficult for them to sing, and whose instinct is against emotional expression, find, nevertheless, much work that satisfies them in the alto or tenor parts of the hymns and four-part choruses; and from that they often gain a foothold for advance in voice training and the other necessary technical and theoretical work of the group.

The girls' study proceeds, on the whole, with the naturalness which comes of their sweet voices, their normal instinct to express emotion in singing, and their conscientiousness. The feeling of their importance to the school singing is strong, and all the drill and study incidental to the preparation of "recital," music for morning exercises or special celebrations, is undertaken with motives adequate to produce musical results, even when a large proportion of the girls are more or less unmusical. They feel more strongly about good singing than the boys do; they are notably more amenable to the suggestion of social opportunities; and their pleasure in their own accomplishment, while in many cases it has a personal phase, is enlarged by the fact that the singing of their group is of prime importance to the success of the school.

The texts of songs are extremely important in the development of singing as a social function. In the primary grades, the children sing about sheep, or reindeer sledges, or garden flowers, at the appropriate moment. In the case of the older children, the choice of song-texts depends, for the greater part, upon their

wider, more highly generalized intellectual and emotional interests. Choruses, hymns, and secular songs which express our common consciousness of interdependence, are rather rare. Some of the noblest hymns are regarded by the children with distaste; those which teach dogma definitely and unavoidably must be omitted, with a few notable exceptions. Most of the present-day attempts to express ethical or religious sentiment in a very modern way, fail to reach down into the depths of our common convictions on the eternal questions of right and wrong, life and death. Either music or text, or both, fall short of our common needs. We are sometimes obliged to overlook deficiencies in literary beauty in a text, but the music must appeal to the children in a vital way. Correlation of the music of a program with the subject is illustrated in the following commencement exercise, the topic of which was "Citizenship."

COMMENCEMENT

Processional Hymn—The City of God

Fifth to Twelfth Grades

Now brightly point our banners to the sky.
We toil o'er hills and through the deserts dry,
To reach the city God hath set on high.

Alleluia!

Sing, sing ye faithful, wake your noblest strain,
In joyous praise now shout the glad refrain;
Behold the City Righteous we would gain.

Alleluia!

For God doth lead us on our journey long,
And bid us labor on with courage strong,
To greet His glorious City with a song.

Alleluia!

A Note of Patriotism - - - - - *Walt Whitman*

Mr. Detmers

American Citizenship - - - - - *Francis W. Parker*

Mr. Carley

Hymn—O Lord of Nations - - - - - *Church Hymnal*

Fifth to Twelfth Grades

O Lord of Nations, hear our joyous praises,
In Thy holy presence we would be;
O let our songs with deep and true devotion
Rise up to Thee in glad sincerity.

Glory to Thee, oh Lord our heav'nly Father,
 Be this evermore our joyous song:
 Glory to Thee, oh Lord of all Creation,
 As on the King's highway we march along.

Training in Citizenship

Beatrice Topping

Duet—O Lovely Peace - - - - - *Händel*

High School Girls

Oh, lovely peace, with plenty crowned,
 Come spread thy blessings all around.
 Let fleecy flocks the hills adorn,
 And valleys smile with wavy corn.

The Meaning of Citizenship

Mrs. Ella Flagg Young

Chorus with Soprano Solo—Lovely Appear - - - *Gounod*

Fifth to Twelfth Grades **Claudine Sturm**

Lovely appear over the mountains the feet of them
 that preach, and bring good news of peace. ¶ ¶
 Ye mountains, ye perpetual hills, bow ye down.
 Over the barren wastes shall flowers now have
 possession. Dark shades of ancient days, full of
 hate and oppression, in the brightness of joy fade
 away and are gone. ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶

In this age, truly blest more than ages preceding,
 shall corn never fail from the plentiful ground.
 Under the shining sky shall the lambs gaily
 bound; void of fear, undisturbed, safely shall they
 be feeding. Then the timorous doves, whereso-
 ever they fly, shall not fear any more the hawk's
 merciless cry.

Presentation of Diplomas

Miss Cooke

Chorus—The Earth is the Lord's - - - *Eleanor Smith*

Fifth to Twelfth Grades

The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof,
 The world and they that dwell therein.
 For he hath founded it upon the seas and estab-
 lished it upon the floods.
 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who
 shall stand in His holy place?
 He that hath clean hands and a pure heart,
 Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor
 sworn deceitfully.

Lift up your heads, your heads, O ye gates, and bo
ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King
of Glory shall come in.

Who is this King of Glory? Who is this King of
Glory?

The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in
battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
Even lift them up ye everlasting doors, and the
King of Glory shall come in.

The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.

Another phase of correlation is represented by such an instance as that of the Jacobite period in eighth grade history. The Jacobite ballads prove a treasure for the whole upper school. They led in one case to the singing of other Scotch ballads and interest in the pentatonic scale. Also four "Scotch" songs were written by the children, two of them in the pentatonic scale,—at their own suggestion.

A tenth grade boys' class once took up a short study of religious music of the Reformation period. They went to a Catholic church, where the music was the best to be heard in the city. A breviary was borrowed, and the rules for singing Gregorian translated from the Latin, and a morning exercise given in which the music of the undivided Church and that evolved by the Protestants were contrasted to the best of the boys' ability. They sang the following program, with help from other groups on the chorale, which was sung in the original rhythm as given by Grove.

Historical Program of Church Music

Note.—In the sixteenth century, a great change took place in religious music. The program to be given this morning is for the purpose of showing some of the changes in church music brought about by the Reformation.

The first group of songs illustrates the music of the undivided church. Luther's great hymn, "Ein'feste Burg," shows the new type of hymn which the people sang in the Protestant churches.

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| In
Latin | 1. Veni Creator: Words by St. Thomas Aquinas, 13th Century; music ascribed to Charlemagne, 9th Century |
| | 2. Media Vita: Melody by Notker Balbulus, a Swiss monk, 10th Century |
| | 3. Antiphon and Psalm |

High School Boys

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| In
German | Ein'feste Burg: Music and words by Martin Luther |
| | Eighth to Twelfth Grades |

There are many times when we want the children to compose tunes. We believe that they need to have the experience of feeling out the relation between a beautiful text and appropriate musical setting; but it has always required the special emotional quality which comes in a situation having social outcome to make the ordinary group of children, musical and unmusical, devise anything but the tritest little imitations. Some of the musical children who can compose more tunes than they or the teacher can take the time to write down, gain confidence in their own gifts for the first time after receiving the respectful attention of a group of their peers.

The best melodies produced in the school, whether by individuals or the usual groups of from two to ten, have been composed under some condition or set of circumstances in which the altruistic attitude was plainly in evidence. This was true of a very good "sentence" (a simple form like the response to prayer used in Protestant churches) composed by seventh and eighth grade boys for a memorial service for a schoolmate. The text had very special associations in the boys' minds. In another instance a spirited class song was written by the Senior Class of girls for their party; some charming songs for the little children by high school girls; a remarkable melody, intended for a school song, by a ninth grade boy; and another for basses by two ninth grade boys; and a series of very attractive ones for a morning exercise by groups between the fourth and twelfth grades.

The dramatic work often requires the help of the music department. A Christmas play needed the services of a special quartette of musical high school pupils; "As You Like It" was provided with two songs; in the play of "Hänsel and Gretel" in German, two musical children sang the folk songs as arranged in the open score of "Hänsel and Gretel;" the French classes often need help for their little dramatic games and songs.

Plays develop intense interest, which goes over into creative music-thinking; in fact, the best two melodies composed in the school thus far, "Hellas," and "Twirl and Turn,"* have been the direct outcome of plays in which there was great freedom of initiative and highly stimulated imagination.

If our country ever develops a national mode of expression

*See Miss Canfield's article.

in music, it will be largely because music teachers learn the value of socializing music for children, of surrounding them with opportunities for feeling the inspiration of giving pleasure, as well as getting it, suggesting continually the community point of view. The methods by which they arrive at this will be as numerous as the schools themselves,—and first of all, the schools will need to be socialized; but the love of beautiful music, together with the free development of the creative instinct in all the children, will be the corner stone of the new art.

II. Original Composition

The social motive, under the best conditions that we can provide, is scarcely discernible in the first two grades, but in the third grade and upward it becomes a conscious factor. It is felt very strongly, especially when a whole grade is working as a group on the composition of an original melody.

It is conceded in other lines of work that the development of initiative for the furthering of the social motive is essential, and that the child who is taught to think independently is far more valuable to the community than the one who merely acts upon the suggestions of others. This is equally true in music.

Melody writing is just as essential for the development of initiative in the musical life of the child as active work in all other lines. He is compelled to draw from his own knowledge of succession of intervals, of form and of rhythm, that which will make a musical whole. He realizes now for the first time that what he has been accumulating all these years is his to use. I am going to give a brief resumé of the original work of the primary grades, as here one can follow the growth of the child's initiative. Melody writing is not essential from a composition standpoint, in the primary grades, as at that age the child's ability for unique, original expression cannot be great except with the musically gifted. But freedom is felt, and ability will grow with the frequency of creating.

One cannot say enough on the importance, harmonically, of original work. Each child hears, even though unconsciously, the musical setting for his own melody, and in playing the accompanying chords the teacher is told very frankly whether her interpretation coincides, or not, with his conception. The children's activity and interest are not confined to the class room. The majority of

pupils use their new power at home, composing melodies, many of which are brought to the school for the teacher's inspection. It is as natural for the child to create music as it is to sing, and we believe that, if encouraged, it would not only open up another joyous field for the child, but it would solve many problems for the teacher in stimulating interest, and permanently establishing the different music values in the child's mind.

Melody writing is as absorbing to the boys as to the girls. They enjoy the feeling that here is an expression of their own. It stimulates their interest in song singing, and to the efforts of others from now on is attached greater significance. Each song is an original conception, like their own.

Unmusical children, in primary grades, are apt to bring out the most original and musical melodies. They are not hampered by form, and can take liberties in the way of jumps in the scale, which the children who have a deep seated feeling for form would not dare indulge in. Form is not to be depreciated, however, as these same unmusical children who have not imbibed some of it by the time they reach the upper grades, bring forth work which is chaotic and worse than useless.

We do not believe in beginning melody writing in the kindergarten. They have not accumulated enough material of the type they can understand and utilize. They are also too conscious as yet and unused to the school room, to express their own ideas without shyness. So the work is begun with the first grade.

Here no shyness exists. A short line or sentence with a definite rhythm is given them, and before the words are fairly uttered, the children respond. Their minds seem to work automatically; they are not hampered with the desire for originality, they merely want to make a *tune*, for which they draw from the simple kindergarten melodies and from all the knowledge unconsciously accumulated. There are many noticeable points in the work with this grade,—perfect unconsciousness and spontaneity, no apparent expenditure of thought, and the perfection of melodies in both rhythm and form. As a rule the unmusical children recognize their own melodies more quickly than do the musical ones. This is quite natural, as the effort is greater and the impression consequently more lasting, whereas with the musical ones, numbers of different settings flit through their minds in rapid succession, all of them pleasing and none of them (with a few exceptions)

lasting. Each melody given, however, is perfect and shows a thorough grasp of the material assimilated.

In the second grade work the results are not so satisfactory. This is easily accounted for by the fact that the children are becoming conscious of more complicated intervals and rhythms. Their note songs contain longer phrases, and the ideas are more complex. Consequently their own work has lost in confidence. It is in the transitional stage,—the endings are not always sure, the phrases are less perfect. However, the pupils are beginning to deal with more intervals, and though in a confused state, their work shows a broadening of musical experience.

In the third grade work the musical balance is regained, and they are able to use confidently the new ideas they have assimilated. The text is lengthened, a whole stanza is now given, and as a rule the balance of ideas is from a musical standpoint, perfectly expressed. Thought is truly expended in trying to obtain the most appropriate setting for the given text. Any musical idea which is not rhythmically perfect, or does not end on the tonic, is instantly recognized and rejected by the children. Each child now concentrates on *one* idea and begins to mold it even in his mind again and again till it is truly satisfactory to himself. Of course, this fixes his idea permanently so that he now recognizes his own melody whenever it is played.

The children of the fourth grade are the best thinkers. They enjoy grappling with problems. For instance, nothing else delights them so much as the composition of two-part exercises. Here is a problem to solve—the thinking out of two independent voices which, when sung together, will sound smooth and pleasant to the ear. Their critical faculties are highly developed; their constantly broadening experience with newer, unique harmonic progressions is thoroughly understood and put into use.

In the preparation of a Greek play, two fifth-grade boys one year evolved a chant for the setting of a long original poem on the deeds of Odysseus. They started by repeating the poem clearly, marking the rise and fall of their voices and the importance of certain words. They went to work at it as they imagined the primitive Greeks to have done. As they recited the poem they drew on the board a curving line showing by the relative height of the curves the rise and fall of their voices, and the relative importance of certain words. In this manner each line of the verse was analyzed

and developed from the inflection of the voice, into a definite melody. The result is not what could, by any possibility, be termed beautiful, but is interesting, has form and a good melodic basis, and has been a profitable experience for the boys, as well as the teacher.

A really remarkable little melody was conceived by a fourth grade through great interest in a fairy play which they gave, and the song, which is a pixie spinning song, shows an unusual amount of originality of conception. Three fairies assemble at night, and in secret, in the humble home where dwells the little girl Rosadew, noted for her gentle disposition and unselfish deeds. Here they spin a garment of wondrous hue for the little girl, and sing a song in praise of her true loveliness, as they spin. The play had a great influence on the fourth grade, and every child in the class was eager to have a share in the making of a melody for the words of the fairy song. In all they spent one and one-half periods on it, every member of the class working at great tension. They said the poem again and again, they thought it, felt it, acted it. A spinning wheel was brought up to the music room and put in motion to help in the feeling and rhythm. They were unanimous in wanting the song to give the impression of a spinning wheel in action. Hence the first two measures,—“Twirl and Turn,” and the repetition. After much subdued humming one child thought out this musical idea which was instantly seized upon by the rest of the class with great enthusiasm. It was fairy-like and, so said the children, very characteristic of a spinning wheel.

Now that the start was made, suggestions for the following lines came flooding in. One phrase after another was written on the board, criticized, rejected, till the class found the one which suited the words and the music of the preceding line. This process was gone over with every line, each child contributing his musical setting and good-naturedly and impartially rejecting it for the one he considered better than his own in expressing the right idea.

The repetitions used in the song were not done unconsciously, nor for lack of new ideas. They were conscientiously thought out, and used because, according to the children, certain ideas needed repetition. Especially in the last two lines is this true. Many melodies were given and put on the board for criticism, but none of them satisfied the children until finally one child, with radiant face, suggested the spinning motif, and the children immediately

Fairies' Spinning Song

CONSTANCE Mac KAYE

Fourth Grade 1910-11

Andante

Twirl and turn, twirl and turn, Thistlekin Flittermouse Seed o' fern

Wondrous the gar - ment we pre - pare, Fit for a true prin - cess to wear;

Gold-en the thread on the spin-dle flies, Pear-ly the tears of Ros-a-dew's eyes

Twirl and turn, twirl and turn, Thistlekin Flitt-er-mouse Seed o' fern.

adopted the idea and sank back satisfied in the knowledge that the song now sounded complete, as they themselves expressed it. Thus, a perfect form was established through their own initiative, and one of the loveliest of their efforts was brought to a close.

At another time these fourth grade children were much interested in a play of Achilles which they had made. One act opened with Achilles and Patroclus sitting in their hut, to whom entered an embassy from Agamemnon with the purpose of inducing Achilles to return to the army. It was necessary for the two friends to be engaged in some activity that should show them unhappily idling away their time while their comrades were at war. Many possibilities were suggested—cleaning armor, playing a game, telling a story, singing and playing the lyre. In a press of other business the matter was temporarily dropped, until a little girl came one morning with the following verses which she had made at home quite alone:

Oh, I'm thinking of Hellas,
Of far-away Hellas;
Where the green fields are lying,
Where the sunlight is dying
On the far-stretching hills of my Hellas.

Oh, I'm thinking of Hellas,
Of far-away Hellas;
Where the cattle are lowing,
Where the waters are flowing,
O'er the wide, sun-lit fields of my Hellas,
My far-away Hellas.

When these lines were read to the class they were received with breathless approbation. It hardly seemed possible to the children that one of themselves could have made anything so lovely. "The poem was perfect. That was just the way Achilles would feel. It had such a lonesome feeling. But it must have a tune." And so a few from the class, not only the most musical ones, but the ones most deeply stirred by the beauty of the verses and the situation, set about making an air. They worked in an atmosphere of high exaltation because they felt that they were handling something entirely fit and beautiful, and something that they had almost seen created, and because in the background loomed the play that they had made and that they loved.

Hellas

VIRGINIA WAGNER - Fourth Grade

Group Fourth Grade 1908-9

Andante

Oh! I'm think-ing of Hellas Of far - a - way Hellas, Where the
 -Oh! I'm think-ing of Hellas Of far - a - way Hellas, Where the

p

green fields are ly - ing Where the sun-light is dy - ing, O'er the far stretch-ing
 cat - tle are low - ing Where the wat - ers are flow-ing, On the wide sun - light

Last ending
pp

fields of my Hel - las — My far. a way Hel - las.
 fields of my Hel - las —

pp

III. Work with Children Backward in Music

Children who are unable to take an active part in the music of their grade lose interest when they find that their best efforts fail to add to the success of that class. The child who sings in a monotone, even if he be unconscious of the effect, will sooner or later be discouraged by his neighbors and by a teacher unable to give him the individual help necessary to correct what in most cases is remediable. It is natural that a child who day after day gets no reaction from musical expression should occupy his mind with other things during the music period. A social responsibility can hardly be expected from children who feel that they can be of no help in a class or school activity. But if we find the special help necessary to enable them to sing in even one song, we have established a basis for renewed effort. Children coming from schools where no music is taught or from other similar environments, are severely handicapped by their lack of technical training, and by becoming suddenly a member of a community which has a repertory built up slowly and with special associations for each song.

It often becomes necessary to separate from the large class children who are backward, and to give them the individual help such an opportunity affords. Indeed, this is imperative in order that they may acquire skill enough to be of value to the community, and thereby gain consciousness of a social responsibility. The first step toward helping children who are unable to do the music work of their grade, is to determine the initial cause of that inability. We realize that the most marked cases with which we deal probably are results of various conditions and not simply one cause which we can remove or overcome. The very nature of music allows the greatest range and number of causes, involving, as it does, simultaneously, time, rhythm, pitch, and emotional expression. Children may have marked musical ambitions and be prevented by some physical defect from taking the active part they desire, or, on the other hand, they may have every muscle and cartilage in promising proportion, but lack co-ordination or aesthetic sense. We find, also, children who do not sing, because their lives have been almost entirely without active musical experience. But we are inclined to think that the seriousness of hereditary unmusical taste is overestimated; that children of un-

musical parents are probably unmusical chiefly through environment. The entire absence of music in the home may of course have caused to be left out that part of the mental equipment acquired by most people during childhood in the average family. Another and very different type of special pupil is one resulting from an atmosphere of ragtime and popular songs. This type is parallel to the one in literature where the experience has been limited to cheap fiction. It is also as easily corrected by the use of music of real value. The children who are products of an atmosphere of low standards crave and understand music which produces a physical reaction only, but they ordinarily recognize, when the fact is pointed out, that this is not its whole purpose and value. Several of the older children of the school who have made demands for "lively music" have spoken when "off guard" of some popular music as "*only ragtime*," or have said, "of course the words don't amount to anything." These special cases in which we have to build up an appreciation of music are almost entirely among new members. The greatest number who require special help are children whose powers of concentration are weak, or who have failed to realize that the mastery of technical work requires hard thinking. A child who has failed to become familiar with the small amount of special knowledge necessary to sight reading cannot go on with his class in what must be a large share of their work, and rapidly loses interest and retards the progress of all. Older children who come to us unprepared to do the music work of their grade often have to experience a change of mental attitude when they find that sight reading involves a system of symbols and mathematics which they have connected with music in a vague way only. The written language of music, with its clefs, signatures, etc., which has grown up and developed with the art, must seem to the person without experience or interest a very intangible and illogical sort of arrangement.

Cases of physical inability to sing are rare and usually temporary, although many minor difficulties are remedied after reference to a physician or parents. It is sometimes evident that the physical ear is imperfect; in which cases we are obliged to admit a different standard, saying perhaps, that part-singing will not be practicable. The physical difficulties during the changing period of the boys' voices varies somewhat in individuals. During the

present year only one boy has been excused from singing on this account.

The separation of a class into groups as defined by their ability to read at sight has so far seemed the most successful way of helping the poor ones and allowing the better ones to advance. One of these special groups made up from the fifth and sixth grades, contains boys who have had special help for nearly three years. In the fourth grade they lacked interest and, with one exception, made almost no progress during that year. During the past year they were reading at sight as well as the rest of their grade. The fact that they have been in a group by themselves and could claim more of the instructor's help has in itself been a leading factor in their improvement. Then, too, they were spared the discouragements incident to working with boys whose endowments easily enabled them to work more rapidly. The first year was largely spent in acquiring a knowledge of the rudiments of sight-reading. Their present ideal, which has furnished motive for this year's work, is that they shall have learned, by the time they are basses, to read any music at sight. They have been able to understand that the music of the school as a whole is limited largely by the ability of the bass and tenor sections. This group of boys has grown to have a pride in their skill in sight reading and song singing. Their delight in a jolly song is what we believe that of a normal boy should be, and could undoubtedly be produced with any such group where the opportunity for individual work is possible.

A group of girls from these same grades, who have had about the same amount of special work, show far less initiative and growth along the technical side. This is partly owing to the far inferior intellectual quality of the group at the beginning and a lack of the friendly spirit which has characterized the group of boys and caused them to help each other.

Complete tone-deafness we almost never find. The lesser degrees of what we ordinarily term tone-deafness vary from inability to change the pitch to correspond with an instrument or voice, to the child who can, with great effort, follow the melody for a limited time only. We have made various experiments to determine, if possible, a remedy for this condition. One boy who seemed to be a well nigh hopeless case, because he was unable to produce a given pitch, was allowed to sing any tone he could and

then the instructor approached that tone scale-wise on the piano. He was then able to continue with the piano, following accurately any simple interval the instructor chose to play. The mental imagery was thus helped out and gave us something on which to work. After a few short periods of this kind of experiment this boy was tried again at reproducing tones at random, this time having him listen carefully to strong tones on the grand piano and at the same time touch the instrument and get close to the vibrating string with the top of the piano raised. He soon noticed an improvement and seemed to experience an awakening. The pleasure of having accomplished this much increased his enthusiasm and it was not long before he announced that he could sing a song with the class. He has gone on from this to be fairly independent and is practically up to average in sight reading and part singing. When there is average intellectual power and a reasonable interest, the child who ordinarily sings in a monotone evidently needs only experience that will bring to his mind an intensely vivid sense of pitch.

An experiment in teaching a few boys the rudiments of piano playing gave success in this intensifying of pitch imagery, and at the same time eliminated the self-consciousness accompanying voice work. Where the motor co-ordinations were poor, it served a useful training in control. As an opportunity for the stimulation of interest, a short piano lesson once or twice a week has without exception been beneficial. In some cases the interest may begin with mere curiosity or an ambition to play ragtime, and in most cases the interest is a passing one, but it always serves a useful purpose.

Study of the individual, his grade activities and his home environment, leads to the determining of underlying causes for deficient work, and points out the special treatment necessary to his case. We have to discriminate between the really musical child, who will give to a phrase a true musical turn, and the child who craves merely the activity and skill necessary to play an instrument. Aside from cases of permanent physical or mental disability, experience shows that although individual help does not make musicians, it at least enables children who would otherwise cease active musical expression to take intelligent part in the work of their class in the school.